

**From:** Michael Ubaldi  
**To:** Microsoft ATR  
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**Subject:** A Lesson in Laissez-Faire

Having received notice that the DOJ is accepting public comments regarding the Microsoft antitrust situation, I decided to pass along an op-ed I recently ran in a local newsletter.

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Impatient creatures we are, we're best off remembering that faith in time-honored institutions will straighten out even the most undesirable situations. Take the free market and personal computing, for instance. There are those of us who use Macintosh. There are those of us who use PC's with a Microsoft Windows operating system (OS). And then there are those of us who use Windows and are not satisfied.

Few PC-based alternatives exist, however, as Microsoft controls over 90% of the PC OS market. The major obstacle preventing a serious challenger to Windows is compatibility. Here's the tidy little paradox: nearly all applications for PC's are coded for Windows; users are unwilling to sacrifice their tools for another OS and decide to stay with Windows; vendors, unable to waste precious capital, cannot design for an OS that no one will use; alternate OS's are left with no programs with which to compete. So nearly all applications (and PC users) stick with Windows.

The Clinton Justice Department saw in this an antitrust violation and resolved to gouge a rent in Microsoft for "competition" to enter. Up went the circus tents, in paraded the subpoenas and the biased rulings?thankfully, the Bush administration put an end to this nonsense. Down went the circus tents.

Last October, news media were alerted to a new PC operating system called LindowsOS. Unlike any other alternative OS, it will attempt to be compatible with all Windows programs. Appealing to small businesses, it hopes to capitalize on Windows dissatisfaction. A prototype will be marketed to the public by the second quarter of 2002 (<http://www.lindows.com>).

As any other enterprise in a free market, Microsoft is vulnerable to perceived negligence; LindowsOS and other spoilers like it will either win PC users over with superior services or else give Microsoft good reasons to reach out to consumers. All this without Washington, D. C.'s meddling. It's overdue vindication for those who know that the best way to solve a simple market problem is to leave the darn thing alone.

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